

DEVICE:
AN EXPLORATION OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SPACE
AS AN ASPECT OF INTERACTIVE SCULPTURE

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

By

Richard Eric Conn

Director: Marya Roland
Associate Professor of Art
School of Art and Design

Committee Members: Dr. Seth McCormick, Art History
Kevin Kirkpatrick, Art

November 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Figures.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Motivation.....	7
Historical Precedence for Audience Manipulation and Participation	13
A Room Full of Devices With no Apparent Purpose.....	19
Enclosures.....	26
Interaction.....	31
Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography.....	29

LIST OF FIGURES
(All works, unless otherwise noted, by Richard Conn)

Figure	Page
1. <i>It Is Always Darkest Just Before the Dawn</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	7
2. <i>Patience is a Virtue</i> , Detail, 2010.....	8
3. <i>All Good Things Come To Those Who Wait</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	10
4. <i>All Good Things Come to Those Who Wait</i> , Detail, 2010.....	11
5. <i>If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try, Again</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	12
6. Marcel Duchamp, <i>Bicycle Wheel</i> , Readymade objects, 1913.....	14
7. Robert Morris, <i>Bodyspacemotionthing Detail</i> , Installation, 1971.....	16
8. Bruce Nauman, <i>Going Around the Corner Piece</i> , Installation with video cameras and monitors, 1970.....	18
9. <i>Patience is a Virtue</i> , 2010.....	21
10. <i>The Squeaky wheel Always Gets the Grease</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	23
11. <i>The Squeaky Wheel Always Gets the Grease</i> , Detail, 2010.....	24
12. <i>It is Always Darkest Just Before The Dawn</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	25
13. <i>Patience is a Virtue</i> , Detail, 2010.....	27
14. <i>All Good Things Come To Those Who Wait</i> , With Participant, 2010.....	30
15. <i>All Good Things Come To Those Who Wait</i> , Detail, 2010.....	30
16. <i>Device</i> , Exhibition, 2010.....	32
17. <i>Time Will Tell</i> , 2010.....	34
18. <i>Patience is a Virtue</i> , With Participants, 2010.....	38

ABSTRACT

DEVICE:
AN EXPLORATION OF INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SPACE
AS AN ASPECT OF INTERACTIVE SCULPTURE

Richard Eric Conn, M.F.A.

Western Carolina University (November 2010)

Director: Marya Roland

This thesis and accompanying exhibition is an investigation of the nature of observation and the importance of audience interaction and response when presented with a challenging art object. The objects or "devices" in this exhibit form a dichotomy of attraction and repulsion through the evocation of fear and curiosity. As aspects of this exploration the exhibit addresses the significance of the display space and how our awareness of interior and exterior defines viewer response and the observation processes. Through an examination of the protocol established by gallery convention I determine how to recontextualize the space to stimulate interaction with my work. This work also addresses the passive- active observation process and the relationship it has to both audience perception and the definition of a contained space.

With references to the Fluxus movement and the work of artists Allan Kaprow, and Robert Morris, this thesis addresses art that requires active investigation and participation by the viewer in order for the work to be complete. Devices created for the exhibition challenge interaction and manipulate the observation process of the audience. These devices function as private interactive spaces dividing the gallery into interior and

exterior spaces. Integrated into each device is a canvas enclosure that allows for only one participant at a time to experience the interaction. Within these cells or personal refuges the viewer is challenged by the nature of this restrictive/contemplative space and his or her relationship to it. My work relates to that of Gregor Schneider in his manipulation of the domestic space with the inclusion of the human form. I also find connections to my work in the works of Bruce Nauman and Arthur Ganson.

The gallery space in conjunction with the devices divides active from passive viewers. Active viewers or participants access the interior of the devices and interact with the mechanisms that are hidden beneath the canvas enclosure. This same enclosure forms the interior space and creates the divide from the common space of the gallery. The active participant is also limited to observation of the interior of the space and to the events created by the mechanism, which he or she may operate. This mechanism is only visible to them. The exterior of the device and the explicit effect of its operation are visible only to the passive viewers. From the exterior, the passive viewer receives only information that passes through the shroud via sound, movement against the fabric or those elements that penetrate the fabric all together. The same shroud that masks the mechanism and creates the private display space hides the head of the active participant. As a result of this integration of participant and sculpture the active participant will appear as an inextricable part of the device to those viewing from outside. It is my intention that the viewer become aware of the container or space into which each event is occurring, the private space of each device and the container of the gallery space as a whole.

Ultimately these devices become proxies for me. As a result they become representative of the vulnerable nature of my art making process. The fear and curiosity

response by the viewer is reflected back by the object and is emblematic voyeuristic relationship between artist and viewer.

MOTIVATION

The construction of each device begins with two sources of inspiration, an object, found or accumulated, and personally significant; next, I associate the object with familiar platitude, as in the device *tilted, It is Always Darkest Just before the Dawn*. This is an improvisational process, and it need not be apparent in the final product of the work. This process functions as the initial motivation and does not set the parameters for the finished work. Also, the platitudes may only be apparent in the title of each device.



Fig. 1. *It is Always Darkest Just Before the Dawn*, With Participant, 2010

The interior, exterior characteristic of each device, created by the canvas cover and the interaction of the audience are paramount to the final product and set the parameters for each finished device. This part of the creative process is worked out as a sketch before fabrication begins on what will be the interactive aspects of each device. The wire mechanism, which exists within the device, becomes the true improvisational segment of the work. With the chosen object in my hand and the platitude in my head I begin to figure movements that best express my reaction to each. Once this process begins, each facet or movement of the mechanism motivates the next. This non-directed process I believe leads to a more intuitive response to the motivational seeds and allows me a more personal response to the mechanism and the objects they animate.



Fig. 2. *Patience is a Virtue*, Detail, 2010

The mechanisms are created from steel wire, a technique I observed in the work of Arthur Ganson. The wire can be formed into any aspect of the finished mechanism—

from a sequence of meshed gears to cams and push rods. The plasticity of the material allows for exploration of movement and object animation without the need of plan or design. This technique allows me to employ an improvisational or indeterminate method to my investigation of the central object and phrase. The sculptures or devices that result from this process become a personification of my creative sensibility. The product of my efforts are couched beneath a tattered history of my work, a canvas shroud sewn from a drop cloth I have carried with me for over a decade. A challenge is presented to the observer, to be satisfied with the outer, whitewashed surface of the canvas or to investigate further and figuratively pass into my head to witness the unrefined manifestations of this creative process.

The audience is separated by the use of the devices into two categories of observation, passive and active. I also see this as two forms of interaction. The passive act is safe observation. This is observation from an established position of certainty. Passive viewers feel that they require no direct interaction with the object to fully understand what they are seeing, or that what they are seeing is not deserving of further investigation. Understanding of the object is formed from postulation, discussion and deduction. Information regarding the device is gathered while remaining within the established protocol of the gallery space.



Fig. 3. *All Good Things Come To Those Who Wait*, Detail With Participant, 2010

By contrast, curiosity about the objects draws the active observer away from his or her passive state. The active observer directly interacts with the device. The perception of each observer is necessary in order to form a complete understanding of the object and more importantly a complete experience of the device. Neither viewpoint is complete nor can it be experienced at the same time. Also neither can be fully experience alone. In order for the device to be fully realized, it is best to have a passive and active observer. With the device titled, *If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try, Again*, the mechanism within the device can be operated from outside by reaching beneath the shroud and tuning the crank but the full experience of the work from the exterior comes from watching of another person inside the device and operating the mechanism. At the same time in order to get a true sense of the interior space of the device, the viewer must fully commit and thereby deny himself or herself the view from the exterior. Alone one can only fully experience the interior and the device in its resting state.



Fig. 4. *If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try, Again*, Detail, 2010

This approach/withdraw character of the sculptures is emblematic of the conflict I deal with in the creation of my work and its relationship to the audience. Rather than simply splayed out for all to see, a full understanding of the objects requires, from the viewer, a genuine interest and perhaps some risk taking.



Fig. 5. *If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again*, With Participant, 2010

HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE FOR AUDIENCE MANIPULATION AND PARTICIPATION

The historical precedence of audience interaction or participation in artwork finds its beginnings in the Dada and Surrealist movements. According to Charles Millward, it was the intent of these artists to “reintroduce literary content into art”, to adjust the modernist object down from its contemplative pedestal in order to reconnect with its contemporary audience. The machine and the mechanical device became a metaphor for the literary in the modern age. The common materials of glass, steel, and everyday objects became the elements separating the work of these artists from the modernist ideal of the autonomous object. Marcel Duchamp’s *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), for example, gives the sense of mechanical motion and while somewhat mockingly alluding to objects created by the early 20th century modernists, relates more directly to the viewer through its pedestrian materials (Millard 111). Duchamp’s view of the interaction between viewer and work was on a much more metaphysical than literal level as expressed in his *Sessions on a Creative Act* in 1957. “All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”(Duchamp) 78



Fig. 6. Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*, Readymade objects, 1913

A more direct interaction with the audience grew out of the Fluxus movement and artist who had developed in the glow of Duchamp's irreverent disdain for artistic conventions. Allan Kaprow in his essay *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock* calls for a new kind of art, one that sets aside all of the pretense and supposition that is typically assigned to art that lives within the confines of the museum/gallery system. In this essay the term *Happenings* is first used (Kaprow 89).

Kaprow, in an effort to escape the walls of the institutional setting would develop elaborate if somewhat hastily constructed settings onto which he would orchestrate his *Happenings*. Although the events were meant to be improvised by the participating audience, Kaprow kept a very tight reign on them as they transpired. This level of control eventually lead to a rift between Kaprow and his mentor John Cage who disapproved of the Kaprow Happenings as an "implicit authoritarian manipulation of the audience" (Joseph 59-61).

Robert Morris, another student of John Cage, was also driven by the desire to reinvent the artist/viewer relationship and to rethink the gallery setting. Yet unlike Kaprow, rather than abandoning the gallery space, Morris intended to recreate it. Morris' early work with minimalist sculpture was closely tied to the institutional environment and the context of the gallery space. The human scale geometric forms were meant to fill the space as a person's presence might. Persuaded by Cagean aesthetics and friends like Robert Smithson, Morris eventually refuted the minimalist concepts for what Smithson called "anti-form sculptures". These works abandon the idea of "pre-thought images" in exchange for "chance, contingency (and) indeterminacy". This manifested itself in works like *100 Pieces of Metal* (1968) (61-69).

In 1971 at the Tate Gallery in London England Morris created the installation *Bodyspacemotionthing* touted by the Tate as “the first time the public was invited to physically interact with a work of art” (Higgins).



Fig. 7. Robert Morris, *Bodyspacemotionthing Detail*, Installation, 1971

Although the installation only lasted 4 days as the result of an over exuberant public, I believe this was a seminal moment in the connection between artwork and audience. In this work the gallery space was in fact recreated as a stage for a performance conducted by the viewer. However, unlike Kaprow's *Happenings*, there is no script to follow. True to the concept of the Anti-form, Morris has left the outcome to chance and indeterminacy. The only control or predictability Morris has over the work is the understanding of the viewer's inclination to interact when presented with such an environment. It was perhaps due to a miscalculation of just how far the public would go when turned loose on this installation, that lead to its short run. As recounted by the UK paper *The Guardian*, “Men started picking up some of the exhibits - weights suspended on chains - and swinging

them around their heads. First aiders were occupied picking splinters out of the rear ends of the miniskirted young women hurt on wooden slides.” The Daily Telegraph quoted a museum guard as saying "The trouble is they went bloody mad," (Higgins)

The understanding of human reaction to objects, events and environmental alterations has become the forte of artist Bruce Nauman. Through the creation of environments that directly relate to the audience with the use of architectural elements, lights sounds and technology, Nauman is able to direct the perceptions and reactions of his viewers. Nauman, who professes a distrust of his audience, creates environments and situations that are not open ended and thereby allow for only the outcomes he intends. (Kraynak 23-31). Janet Karynak in her essay *Participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments*, points to the development of "game theory" in the nineteen sixties, a method used to predict the actions and thereby manipulate large numbers of people, as a method employed by Nauman. Understanding the basic nature of human response to specific stimuli, Nauman is able to predict and thereby influence the action of his viewers. In the work *Going Around the Corner Piece* (1970), Nauman creates a space and an environment that feeds our ego in the desire to see ourselves on a TV monitor while at the same time giving us no more than a glance of ourselves as we disappear around the corner and off of the screen. Around each corner of the plasterboard cube the scene repeats itself. As the cameras and monitors are set up to offer this presentation in just one direction the audience dutifully scurries around the cube in the desired direction with no written or audible instructions from the artist (31-37)

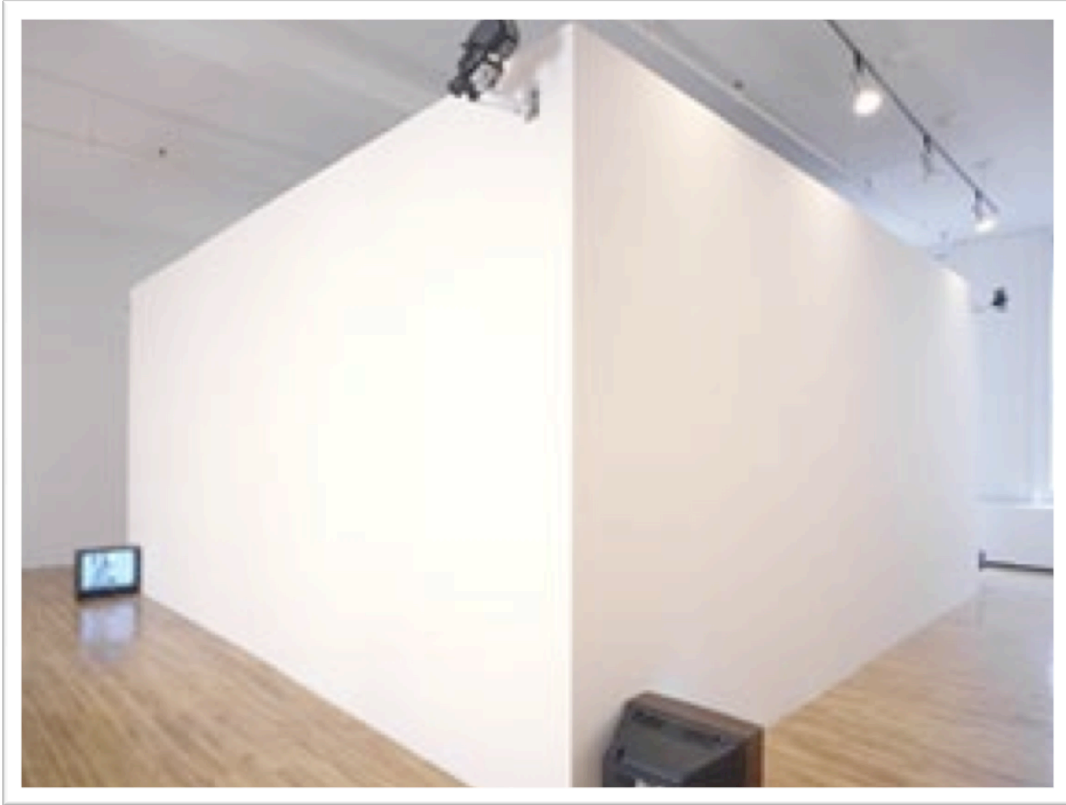


Fig. 8. Bruce Nauman, *Going Around the Corner Piece*, Installation with video cameras and monitors, 1970

Recontextualizing the gallery space and the utilization of the audience as an integral aspect of concept completion are matters I am addressing with my work. Audience manipulation is an issue I am resolving with a diametric tension of repulsion and curiosity, which results in an engage and repel reaction from the viewer. Unlike Nauman I do not distrust my audience, nor do I try to subvert their autonomy, rather I appeal to their sense curiosity and voyeurism by offering a mystery and then challenging the viewer to investigate

A ROOM FULL OF DEVICES WITH NO APPARENT PURPOSE

The gallery space is a room with no apparent purpose. That of course is by design, as the purpose of the space is to be established by the work that it contains at any particular moment. Stripped of all possible content, it is meant to be a blank canvas, the empty stage upon which artwork may make its case without the distracting hum of everyday life to dilute the statement. Over time, maintaining this illusion of contextual vacuum has become an impossible task. The pristine gallery space, the “White Cube” as Brian O’doherly puts it, screams of the sacred and revered. It is a space where one speaks in hushed tones with your hands at your side and with an awareness that you are being closely watched for proper behavior. It is a type of space with a past and a protocol and by placing objects within its walls you are answerable to that vast history (O’Doherty 15).

How does one change such a ritualized space? My thesis exhibition answers that question by changing the relationship of the viewer to the art object and by extension to the gallery. This exhibition consists of six individual devices laid out on the gallery floor as workstations might be laid out in an industrial setting. The industrial setting brings with it, its own set of rules and conventions that help to disrupt the historical aura of the art museum. Through the implementations of such industrial identifiers as black and yellow hazard tape the gallery space becomes less a place for meandering contemplation of artwork and more of venue where one is directed to the machine they are to operate. The design and placement of the devices within the space will not so much invite the

viewer to interact with the work as assign them to it and thereby break down the “hands off” protocol of the museum space.

These devices, in the simplest terms, consist of a mechanism made from welded wire shrouded beneath a sewn and painted canvas enclosure. Each device is connected to a found or collected object. Many of these objects have a deep and personal history with me and were a source of inspiration in the design of the hidden mechanism. In the device titled, *Patience is a Virtue*, an orange upholstered chair is placed facing a painted blue breakfast table eight feet apart. The two objects are connected by a long canvas enclosure that is suspended above both objects. The mechanism, hidden within this enclosure when operated by the viewer, will meticulously roll a teacup around the periphery of the table. The use of familiar objects such as a chair or a teacup is meant to act as visual cues to the audience. These objects, juxtaposed and connected to a shrouded mechanism, become tools to spark curiosity in the viewer thereby drawing him or her to closer inspect the device. Should the individual's level of curiosity overcome the fear or repulsion formed by the shrouded device, he or she may interact with the hidden mechanism



Fig. 9. *Patience is a Virtue*, 2010

Each device offers certain implicit and explicit information. Some aspects of the hidden mechanism move against the surface of the canvas shroud while others pass beneath the lower edge and others penetrate the shroud completely. The thin canvas also allows the sound of the mechanism to pass into the common space of the gallery. These implied activities in addition to the exposed familiar objects should also function as an invitation for a viewer to investigate the interior created by the canvas cover. In the device titled *The Squeaky Wheel Always Gets the Grease*, a single table leg is suspended within the piece above a set of heavy metal casters. The table leg and the mechanism that animates it are concealed beneath a canvas enclosure. A smooth wooden handle attached

to a crank that passes through the side of the canvas cover invites the viewer to operate the device. The mechanism inside strikes the table leg against a wooden box while slowly drawing the entire piece to the wall of the gallery. Curiosity formed by the sounds and vibrations created within the device should entice the operator to investigate the interior of the piece. An incision cut into the canvas cover at head level will give the operator access.



Fig. 10. *The Squeaky wheel Always Gets the Grease, With Participant*, 2010

Each of the devices has a similar incision that indicates the point of entry for access to its interior. Through the act of investigation and participation the viewer

becomes a performer and an intrinsic part of the device. This is made even clearer to the passive observer because the head of the active participant is shrouded by the canvas enclosure.

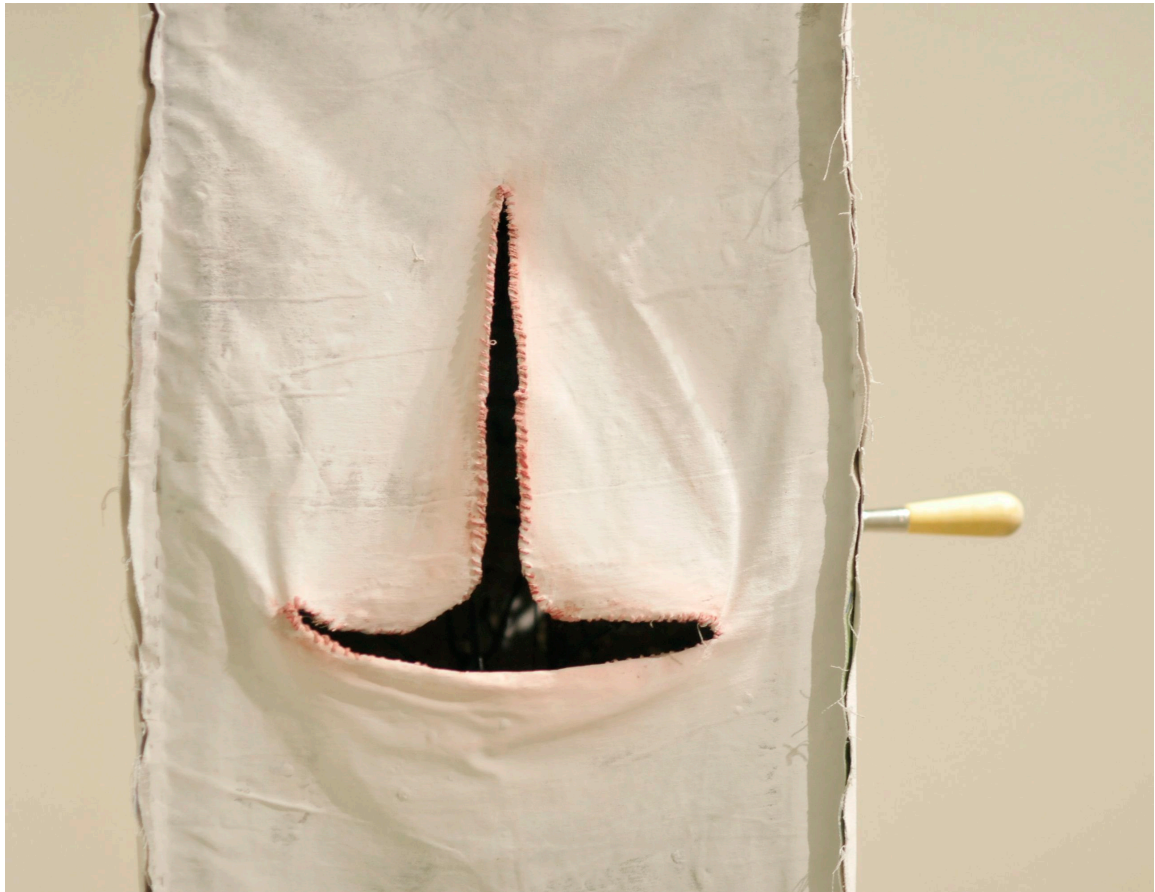


Fig. 11. *The Squeaky Wheel Always Gets the Grease*, Detail, 2010

Within the gallery space some observers will actively participate with the devices and others will passively watch from a distance. This interaction becomes an important and integral aspect of my work because viewers are separated, active from passive and interior from exterior. The canvas enclosure that covers the mechanism forms an interior space that allows for only the active participant to witness the functioning of the mechanism. However, the active participant is denied the ability to see the results of his

or her activation of the mechanism from the exterior. The passive viewer while denied the implicit information beneath the cover is able to view the work in a complete sense as the active participant is integrated into the device and making it function for the passive viewer to see.

My own personal experience in operating one of these devices is an overwhelming urge to see yourself during the devices operation. But the placement of the shroud functions as a blindfold that will not allow you to look in the mirror and see the results of your participation.



Fig. 12. *It Is Always Darkest Just Before the Dawn*, With Participant, 2010

ENCLOSURES

The canvas cover on each of the devices is a central component to the work and essential in developing the experience I intend for both the passive and active viewer. The cover forms a series of inconsistencies for the viewer. They are all derived from solid rectilinear forms and thereby allude to architecture. The corners are straight and the edges are somewhat rigid. The interior framework is formed from durable materials and gives the canvas skins forms a sense of structure. Although I avoid an overall sense of organic pliability, I have included some sense of decay or degradation through the use of old drop cloths as my source material. I have used these cloths for years and they carry with them the marks and scars that come with age and use. The canvas skin laid over the structure alludes to a living membrane. The incision that indicate the point of entry for each device is hemmed with a rough whip stitch and tinted red to give the sense of a wound. This emphasizes the sense of vulnerability as the viewer transitions from exterior to interior and passive viewer to active participant. Although, this may not be a particularly inviting threshold it functions to add tension and mystery as to the contents beneath the skin.

From a purely analytical viewpoint the shroud is open-ended container. It defines a space within the device and establish interior from exterior. It also allows me to determine what is hidden and what is revealed. Minus viewer interaction, the devices function as aesthetic objects. With the inclusion of the active participant the work becomes a much more metaphorical and perhaps troubling object. As stated earlier, the

canvas hood functions to hide the mechanism within each device, yet being open ended and with some aspects of the mechanism revealed, I intend it to invite investigation. By interacting with the device the head and sometimes the hands of the active participant are hidden beneath the canvas shroud.



Fig. 13. *Patience is a Virtue, Detail*, 2010

The act of passing from exterior to interior is in of itself a transformational act. One that is perhaps overlooked or made mundane by our daily entering and exiting of houses, cars, etc. It becomes a much braver act when entering into something as unfamiliar as one of these devices. The transition becomes one of isolation but also one of vulnerability. The active participant shifts from the company of the audience to singular space of the shroud. From entering this space in most of the pieces, the mechanism is revealed to the participant. Certain visual cues such as smooth wooden knobs or handles offer direction as to how the device is operated. It is clear to me that the reaction to this interior space will vary greatly from one person to the next. Although it is meant to be a contemplative space, the activity of the participant within the canvas enclosure is cyclical, repetitive and mundane. The ritualistic nature of this activity may enhance the sense of contemplation or merely act as an irritant. The experience will be a unique for each participant. Renate Puvogel, in her article *Negative Spatial Sculpture*, about Gregor Schneider's *Dead House UR* points out the difficulty in determining whether his work is meant as a prison or a refuge. Although when discussing his work, she finds it has more in common with Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri* than with Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau*. This ambiguity between what would seem two extremely different environments points to the thin line of distinction that separates them (Puvogel 128-129). It is not difficult to find historical examples in which the prison cell has become the refuge for contemplation.

To share this space with the hidden mechanism adds another layer of content. The idea of a prison cell and a machine or mechanism carries with it many sinister connotations. However, the scale and composition of both the "cell" and the mechanism

reduces it down to an almost toy like level. The mechanism beneath the shroud is not a device of torture. It is more like an uncomfortable joke. In *All Good Things Come to Those Who Wait*, a primary school desk is capped with a shrouded mechanism. A sharpened pencil rests point down on the desk surface. The back end of the pencil is attached to a smooth wooden handle that drives the device overhead. To the left of the desk on the floor a jumble of bright yellow string is piled with a single strand leading up into the canvas enclosure. As the active viewer sits in the desk, his/her head obscured by the canvas cover, the operation of the device results in a seemingly endless circle being drawn on the desk. Meanwhile a spool of string, matching the color of the pencil slowly unfurls at the feet of the participant. This act is not sinister but mundane and ridiculous.

From the exterior, the passive viewer witnesses the transformative act of the participant moving from the exterior to the interior of the device. The canvas membrane of the cover acts to separate portions of the participant's body from the rest of the gallery space, but in a metaphorical sense they have left the room. Although alone within the device, the active participant has now become the performer. From the exterior viewpoint the simple geometric form of canvas shroud acts to homogenize or dehumanize the performer. While the performer's identity remains with them, inside the canvas enclosure, from the exterior, they have become simply part of the device, an amalgamation of object and viewer.



Fig. 14. *All Good Things Come To Those Who Wait*, With Participant, 2010

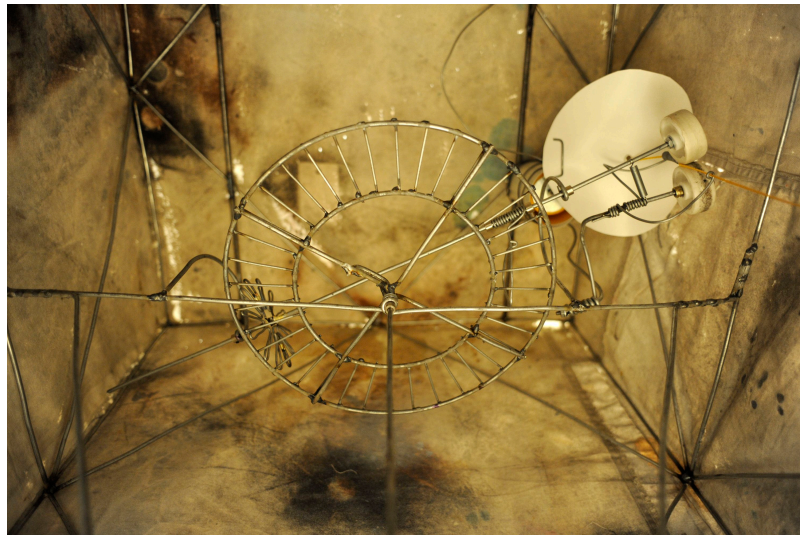


Fig. 15. *All Good Things Come to Those Who Wait*, Detail, 2010

INTERACTION

One of the primary problems in the fabrication of the devices is the creation of an invitation to interact without diluting the formal aesthetics of the work. This aesthetic in and of itself functions to both draw in and repel the viewer. Additionally, overcoming the formal nature of the gallery space and of the hands-off protocol is a formidable task. I do not feel it is simply a matter of coaxing the viewer into action with cues of comfort or approval, because the viewer's sense of gallery protocol would override any desire to do so. In order to overcome this perception, I have presented the gallery space as an active work environment as opposed to merely a place of observation. The Thesis Gallery Space at Fine Art Museum of Western Carolina University already has a painted concrete floor. This helps to give the space a utilitarian aura. Within this space I have established pathways for the viewers to and around the devices with the use of yellow and black striped warning tape. The tape on the concrete floor gives the viewer a sense of an industrialized space that establishes a new set of rules. The tape breaks down barriers established by the formal nature of the gallery, and the devices themselves inspire curiosity or perhaps voyeurism. The audience as a result will presumably be free to investigate or not, what lies beneath the canvas shroud.

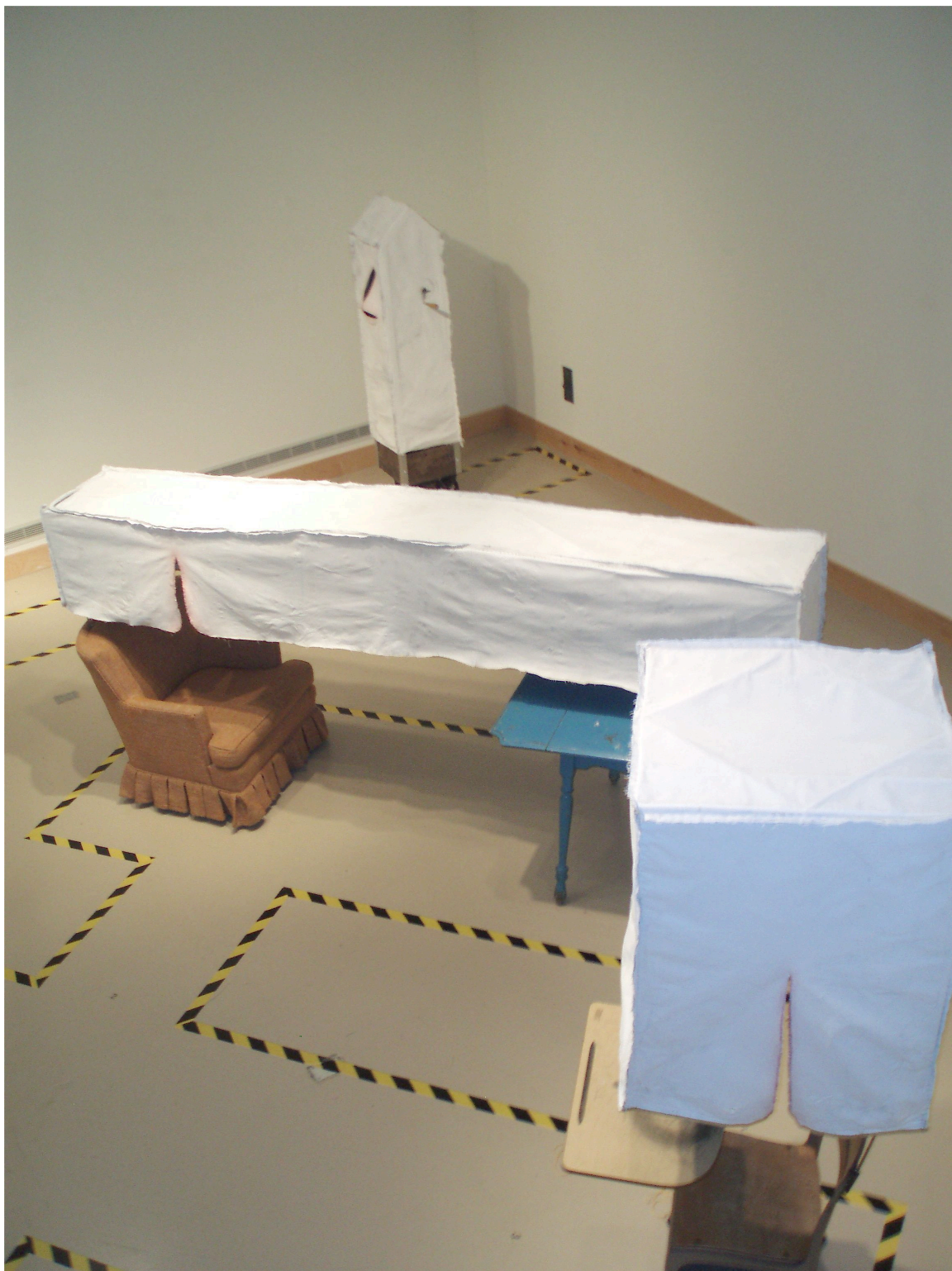


Fig. 16. *Device, Exhibition*, 2010

The insatiable desire to know cause and effect is a powerful force in human nature. I believe that offering the previously mentioned cues to investigate will be a strong draw to interact. When designing the devices I left portions of the internal mechanism exposed in addition to certain interfacing elements such as smooth wooden handles or knobs. These objects are my cause and effect cues.

The shroud that covers the internal mechanisms is not a closed form. Left open at one end, it is an accessible space. The open end faces downward and cannot be examined passively from a distance. The inquisitive viewer will approach and bend to look up inside the fabric enclosure. Acting upon the same temptation to look behind a door that has been left ajar, the curious viewer will investigate to see what might be on the other side. A closed door, just as a closed form is certain in its state and the information it offers is only on its exterior. The door left ajar is an open container and offers the mystery of its contents. It is also a point of transition from exterior to interior and the transformation that movement from one to the other has to offer.

Finally the materials and construction of the devices function as an invitation to the audience. The devices are made of common but durable material. There is no sense of preciousness about the objects. The craftsmanship is practical, utilitarian but not masterful or rare. The devices are constructed with the same care as one might put into a gate latch or the hasp on an old closet door. As in the device titled *Time Will Tell*, the old folding chair has been left with all of the scars and scratches that denote its long but unremarkable history. The sturdy angle iron that supports the mechanism and its enclosure has been unceremoniously welded to the frame of the chair. Because of these aspects, the viewer should not have any fear of manipulating or damaging the object.



Fig. 17. *Time Will Tell*, 2010

Nothing about the mechanisms is delicate or irreplaceable, and it is my intention they not be perceived as sanctified art object. Just as in Robert Morris' *Bodyspacemotionthing*, composed of plywood, concrete and bits of rope, the materials here also serve to dissolve the sanctimonious aura of the gallery space. The level of destruction to Morris' installation speaks to the power curiosity over the aura of the gallery space. In *Device* the redefinition of the gallery space as an active workspace as opposed to an unbridled playground will lead to a more positive interaction.

Each of the devices in this exhibition is created with an awareness of their aesthetic qualities. Although they may function as interactive sculptures, ultimately they self-portraits and function as proxies for me set within the context of a workspace. Investigation and participation with the devices sparks the essence of the artwork. Perceptions of the artwork formed by the viewer are affected by the nature of the observation either passive or active and by the observer's physical relationship to the device. The participant's perception will be affected by the transition to the interior space and the sense of vulnerability that comes with satisfaction of curiosity. The passive viewer's perception is affected by observing the exterior of the device in the active workspace and by witnessing the participant's transition into the device and animation of it.

CONCLUSION

The objective in this body of work is to present the viewer with a challenge and an opportunity, to view the sculptures I have created from a safe, distant, position or to take the bold step to interact with the piece directly. The viewer may then choose to make the transformative move to actually enter the piece itself. I have facilitated this process through two motivating elements, the reconfiguring of the essence gallery display space and by creating a sense of mystery about the contents hidden within of the individual sculptures. Through the implementation of industrial allusions I have attempted to suspend the ritual of the gallery space and the sanctity of the art object. The sculptures I have presented as devices rather art objects and have displayed them in a manner that implies workstations. The mystery that is created by the hidden aspects of the devices may go unresolved by the viewer. The level of curiosity over fear will determine if the viewer is satisfied with the external aesthetics of the sculptures or will be drawn in by the sense of mystery created by the hidden aspect of the work.

Each of the devices created as part of this exhibition is the product of an improvisational process that include found or collected objects that possessed personal history and meaning to me. As a result of this method, and perhaps on a subconscious level, these devices become autobiographical. These "self-portraits" are not so much a narrative or physical representation as a reference to my relationship as an artist to the people with which I come in contact.

The objects chosen for inspiration and the improvisational approach used in the creation of the devices lead to an intimate and personal expression of the objects through the animated mechanism. The common thread of cyclical movement in each work creates a tension and a contradiction between a contemplative and ridiculous action. This becomes an expression of my discomfort in revealing unrefined perceptions of myself. Wrapping all of this up in a canvas skin that carries with it a history of my work over the past ten years has made these devices proxies for myself. It is representative of the tendency I have to keep my true intentions wrapped in mystery. The conflicted invitation to enter the interior of the work through a gaping wound in the canvas membrane becomes an expression of the vulnerability created by this interaction for both viewer and artist. As difficult and uncomfortable a process as this might be for both parties it is a necessary interaction for the full expression of the work and thereby a full understanding of my intention. Although the devices become very personal objects, I believe the interactions that they represent are ubiquitous to human relations. The fear of truly revealing oneself, in conjunction with the apprehension of truly knowing another becomes this strained push and pull that is manifested in the devices I have built for this exhibition.



Fig. 18. *Patience is a Virtue, With Participants*, 2010

Bibliography

Duchamp, Marcel. *Bicycle Wheel*. Original is lost.

Duchamp, Marcel. "The Creative Act." Lebel, Robert. *Robert Lebel: Marcel Duchamp*.

New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959. 77-78.

Higgins, Charlotte. *Tate Modern's Turbine Hall recreates a 1971 sensation*. 6 April 2009.

guardian.co.uk. 28 September 2010

<[www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/06/tate-modern-](http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/06/tate-modern-bodyspacemotionthings-turbine-hall)

[bodyspacemotionthings-turbine-hall](http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/apr/06/tate-modern-bodyspacemotionthings-turbine-hall)>.

Joseph, Branden W. "Robert Morris and John Cage: Reconstructing a Dialogue." *October*

81 (1997): 59-69.

Kaprow, Allan. "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock." Karmel, Pepe. *Jackson Pollock:*

Interviews, Articles, and Reviews. Ed. Jasmine Moorhead. New York: The

Museum of Modern Art, 1999. 89.

Kraynak, Janet. "Participation: Bruce Nauman's Enviroments." *Grey Room* 10 (2003):

22-45.

Millard, Charles W. "Dada, Surrealism, and the Academy of the Avant-Garde." *The*

Hudson Review 22.1 (1969): 111.

Morris, Robert. *Bodyspacemotionthing*. The Tate Gallery, London.

Nauman, Bruce. *Going Around the Corner Piece*. Property of the artist.

O'Doherty, Brian. *Inside the White Cube The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Ed. Jan

Butterfield. San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1976.

Puvogel, Renate. "Negative Spatial Sculpture." *The Parkett Series With Contemporary Artist* December 2001: 124-149.